

NATIONAL CAVE AND KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MONTHLY UPDATE FOR FEBRUARY 2004

PROGRESS MADE BY THE INSTITUTE STAFF AND PARTNERS THIS MONTH:

- The National Geographic Channel's series *Living Dangerously* featured Director Louise Hose (LH) and her scientific research at Cueva de Villa Luz. The episode will air again in March.
- Writing and review of the 2003 NCKRI Annual Report was completed and lay-out was well-underway by the end of February. Roger Scott (RS) is overseeing lay-out by a contracted graphic artist and the publication.
- RS has worked with a graphic designer to develop the NCKRI logo based on input from a variety of sources over the last two years. The final design options may be viewed at: <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/nckri/news.htm>. The Institute requests that comments on the logo be sent to nckri-mail@cemrc.org by March 14.
- RS worked with Jim Wood of the National Park Service Geologic Resources Division to update information on the Institute website, <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/nckri/>.
- RS and LH completed site evaluations for Carlsbad and Ruidoso, New Mexico, in anticipation of a National Speleological Society bid to host the 2009 International Congress of Speleology (ICS) in the United States. The information, along with letters of support for the ICS from the Institute and local land managers, were sent to the National Speleological Society ICS Planning Committee.
- LH continued discussions on possible partnership options between NCKRI and the National Speleological Society (NSS) in the publication of the *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies* with NSS Executive Vice President Don Paquette and others. Eddie Kassman at NPS-Geologic Resources Division began preparation of a potential Cooperative Agreement.
- Ed Kassman and Dave Shaver in the NPS-Geologic Resources Division continued to work on passing the \$1.9569 million to the City of Carlsbad to build the NCKRI headquarters.
- The first announcement for the NCKRI and National Park Service sponsored special topic session, *From Subterranean Crawlways to Scientific Hallways: Research on Our Public Cave and Karst Lands*, planned for next November's Geological Society of America's meeting was sent out to cave and karst geoscientists.
- LH continued writing a draft business plan for the Institute.
- New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology interviewed three finalists for the Chief Scientist position at the Institute.
- City of Carlsbad Administrator, Jon Tully, sent an updated statement of the City's "matching fund" commitment to the Institute's headquarters that the City is building. Carlsbad has now committed \$2,371,000 to the project. (The state of New Mexico has provided \$1,640,000 of the funding to the City). This amount exceeds the current federal appropriate for the project by \$414,320. The total

building fund now stands at \$4,327,900 (\$3,706,900 in cash and \$621,220 in-kind property and property/infrastructure development by the City).

- Lewis Land (LL) has been field mapping with Carol Dehler, geologist from Idaho State University, who is doing surface geologic mapping of the Seven Rivers and Lake McMillan South quadrangle maps, north of Carlsbad, for the NM Bureau of Geology as part of the USGS StateMap program. The area includes extensive gypsum karst, caves, and sinkholes. Land's role in the project is to provide a karst focus to the StateMap geologic mapping program in the lower Pecos valley.
- This past month has seen the culmination of all interviewing for the Chief Scientist position. As the month closes, the job offer is about to be made, pending final approval of the New Mexico Tech search committee.
- NCKRI staff in Carlsbad (LH, RS, LL) met with two candidates for the Visiting Chief Scientist position to provide them with information on the Carlsbad area and Institute programs.
- LL and Penny Boston (PB) met to discuss logistics of the NMGS 2006 field conference on caves and karst of southeastern New Mexico. The meeting also discussed a proposed sampling program in the Snowy River Passage of Fort Stanton Cave, northern Sacramento Mountains.
- LL field checked road cuts along highway 62-180, at the base of El Capitan, Guadalupe Mountains, Texas, to evaluate them as possible field trip stops during the NMGS 2006 field conference.
- LL continued collecting hydraulic head data from the Artesian Aquifer in the northern part of the Roswell Artesian Basin. The Artesian Aquifer is a karstic aquifer with multiple evidence of non-Darcian conduit flow, and the principal source of water for irrigation and municipal water supply in southeastern New Mexico.
- The Cave and Karst science course at NM Tech is conducting real speleothem simulation experiments in the laboratory.
- PB has become the advisor for the senior thesis project of NM Tech undergraduate Stefani Bennett. Ms. Bennett is planning to develop a cave and karst laboratory curriculum aimed at high school and lower division college level students. We envision this as being potentially publishable and something which could be of great assistance to other faculty who might be considering offering cave and karst science units in their high school classes or parts of undergraduate courses in general Earth sciences, or as a main resource for laboratory exercises in a cave and karst science course.
- PB was interviewed about the notion of exploration of caves on other planets to be broadcast on Albuquerque Channel 4 within the next few weeks.
- The current, revised concept building plans are now posted at:
<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/nckri/news.htm>.
- The Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) aired nationwide an hour-long science documentary on Cueva de Villa Luz, Mexico, on February 8th. Institute staff (Hose and Boston) and 7 NCKRI volunteers worked very closely with the production team providing both expertise and "talent". The producer reports that the show has been very well received by both viewers and scientists in Japan.

They are now working on a longer, high-definition version of the show for wider distribution and also have plans to convert the show to English.

PLANS: Anticipated activities for the near future include:

- Dr. Penelope J. Boston will speak in Carlsbad on March 15th at 7:00 pm on the connection between some cave ecosystems and the search for life on Mars and other extraterrestrial bodies. The presentation will launch a new lecture series initiative by the Institute and will be open, free of charge, to the public.
- The 2003 Annual Report should be printed and ready for distribution in late March.
- We hope to finalize the Institute logo after March 15th, the close of the comment and review period.
- The Institute hopes to complete writing a draft business/operations plan in March. This plan will include a proposal for how NCKRI will be jointly administered and how the transition might be accomplished.
- We anticipate continuing discussion with the National Speleological Society concerning a potential partnership arrangement supporting the *Journal of Cave and Karst Studies*.

NCKRI STAFF:

LH – Louise Hose, National Park Service

RS – Roger Scott, National Park Service

LL – Lewis Land, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR)

PB – Penelope Boston, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology